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SOVIET CONTROL OF ALBANIA

[Comment: The following information on conditions in Albania is based on an article appearing in the Ankara newspaper Zafer, two articles from the Istanbul newspaper Yeni Istanbul, and an article from the Istanbul newspaper Son Posta. Zafer attributed its article to the Turkish version of the Free Albania News Bulletin, [possibly Shqipëria (Albania), official organ of the Free Albania National Committee], while the Yeni Istanbul articles were signed by Marc Marceau, the paper's special Athens correspondent. The Son Posta article was dispatched from Belgrade.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources.]

Albania, although a small country and a poor one, is important to the USSR as a bridgehead for operations against the West. Especially important is the island of Sazen, which dominates the Straits of Otranto. The island is a perfect site for a submarine base, (1) and 4 years ago, the Soviets brought more than 1,000 Russian workers there to convert the island into a base. The island is now a forbidden zone (2) and even Enver Hoxha must obtain a special permit from the Soviet commander to go there.(1)

The state administration is completely under the control of Soviet officials. Not a single sheet of paper leaves the Foreign Ministry without being scrutinized by Soviet officials. Industry, railways, and roads are controlled by Soviet specialists. In the Ministry of Interior, a Soviet General, Dimitri Kurbatov [or Korbato (1)], serves as technical advisor but actually controls the police, as well as port activities, newspapers and radio broadcasts.

A General Sokolov heads the Soviet Military Mission. He, together with Soviet Generals Kurbatov and Glabo and two colonels, holds the real power in Albania. [According to Le Messager d'Athenes of 11 March, Sokolov is Major General Yoakhim Sokolov; the two colonels are K. Vasilev and Semen Armenov. The same newspaper says that a Viktor Glebov is a military attache.] Sokolov has a staff committee of 35 officers. To consolidate their control, the Soviets have divided Albania into four areas, each of them headed by a Soviet chief inspector.(2)

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The Albanian Army is headed by an Albanian officer, and every unit of the Albanian armed forces also has its native Albanian officer; however, every decision is actually made by a Soviet officer, in whose hands lies the real power.(1)

Reports from Belgrade claim that a liberation movement composed of Albanian patriots has been formed in Albania. The organization is headed by an Apostol Tanefti and numbers 50,000. According to reliable sources, these forces will march on Tirana on a fixed date in a move to overthrow the Hoxha regime.(3) However, while such reports are heard from time to time about resistance activities in Albania, including one concerning an uprising against the government after Stalin's death, the facts are believed to be greatly exaggerated.(2)

The Soviets take every precaution to prevent news from leaking out of the country. However, the free Albanian committees and Yugoslavia manage to pass on news to other countries. While there is undoubtedly unrest in the country, it is doubtful that much can be accomplished by such events as the raising of the national flag on public buildings by Albanian students, increased sabotage activities, and clashes between guerrillas and the security organization.

While the economic and political situation endangers the Hoxha regime, the government is strengthened by the people's fear of partition of the country /by the Greeks and Yugoslavs/. It is felt that if Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey were to guarantee Albania's territorial integrity, the Albanian government would be weakened.(4)

#### SOURCES

1. Ankara, Zafer, 3 Apr 53
2. Istanbul, Yeni Istanbul, 12 Mar 53
3. Istanbul, Son Posta, 23 Mar 53
4. Istanbul, Yeni Istanbul, 20 Mar 53

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